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The Changing Security Environment

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most challenging dimensions of the post-Cold War world is the requirement to identify and evaluate the enduring and new security dangers that oppose U.S. strategic goals. In describing national security issues facing his second Administration, President Clinton advised his newly appointed national security team:

The challenges are many -- terrorism; the threat of weapons of mass destruction; drug trafficking; environment degradation; ethnic, religious and racial conflicts; dealing with the sea changes occurring in Asia and elsewhere throughout the globe.¹

These challenges are now all too familiar to military planners. While traditional security problems -- to include the rise of regional hegemony and the threat of local interstate conflict -- remain central concerns, an array of less well-defined dangers have assumed prominent places in military planning considerations. Individually and collectively, these traditional and non-traditional security problems are shaping and defining security environments throughout the world.²

In 1996, former Secretary of Defense William Perry set out a "policy for managing post-Cold War dangers" that is based on three elements: the prevention of emerging threats, the deterrence of those threats that do develop, and the defeat of threats to U.S. and allied interests "if prevention and deterrence fail."³ This three-tiered approach of prevention, deterrence, and use of military force places a premium on foreseeing and understanding the challenges to U.S. interests in the years ahead.

In looking at trends shaping 21st Century threat assessments, this article addresses six issues which are influencing the evolution of perils to U.S. security interests, and which make strategic

planning more complex. These include developments changing the nature of future war; shifting regional alignments; the development of security threats which are not limited by national boundaries or affiliation; the interagency character of threat assessment and response; weapons and military technology proliferation; and the rapid pace of change itself. The other FMSO-authored articles in this special issue of *Military Review* (May-June 1997) address developments associated with these areas. [Articles from this issue are posted on the FMSO Homepage.]

CONSIDERING THE NATURE OF FUTURE WAR

A central task for military planners at the dawn of the 21st century is assessing the impact of existing political, economic, military, and technological trends on the nature of armed conflict.⁴ In the West--and other parts of the world as well--a dominant concern has been the revolution in automated command, control, intelligence, and radio-electronic warfare systems. For western specialists, this phenomenon has taken the name of the Revolution in Military Affairs [RMA]. Responses to new developments associated with this term are influenced by the judgement that general nuclear war in the post-Cold War World is extremely unlikely, and that regional conflicts based on ethnic, national, economic, and social causes are the most probable warfighting contingencies.

It is relatively easy to identify the manifestation of emerging "RMA" warfighting technologies in practice--it dates from the campaign fought by the US-led coalition during the Gulf War. The Gulf War represented the harbinger of changes that will transform warfare as profoundly as did mechanization and the introduction of nuclear weapons.⁵ Since the end of the Desert Storm, however, the significance of the "revolution in military affairs" for future war has become linked to issues of force structure, doctrine, and maintaining the technological initiative for the US into the next century. Quality forces will be those equipped, organized, and trained to make use of advantages in information, penetration, and precision against an opposing force.⁶ These trends are reshaping warfare towards a joint endeavor in which synergy is achieved through simultaneity. These forces will be able to achieve "a qualitatively different way of fighting--the ability not only to strike the enemy deep, but to see the enemy deep in real time."⁷

Since mid-decade, U.S. Army force modernization has emphasized maintaining technological superiority in force projection and sustainment, force protection, winning the information war, conducting precision strikes, and dominating the maneuver battle.⁸ An Army that has mastered these requirements, as Army Chief of Staff Dennis J. Reimer noted, will be able to handle "a wide spectrum of unpredictable dangers and threats." More specifically as GEN Reimer observed, these include regional conflicts involving the use of advanced conventional weapons, ballistic missiles, and chemical and biological weapons, as well as peacekeeping and peacemaking operations."⁹

At present, much of the US discussion of future battlefields is global in context and nonnuclear in threat. While there has been some speculation on probable "peer competitors" in the first decades of the next millennium, tectonic movements in regional balances, new dynamics of conflicts among civilizations, and new environmental-ecological challenges make the articulation of a specific threat very difficult. A number of these "threat" issues for each region are addressed in the articles which follow. In any event, the application of new technologies to emerging security

environments may be challenging in unexpected ways. For example, in his article "A Face of Future Battle: Chechen Fighter Shamil Basayev," Major Raymond Finch examines a new kind of combatant that U.S. forces will have to consider and understand in the years ahead. The battlefield upon which Basayev fought, bears little resemblance to futuristic visions of digitized warfare.

In addition, the entry fee for new information-oriented battlefield systems is relatively low, lower than it has been for nuclear technology or even heavy armor systems. This is made possible by an off-the-shelf acquisition of information and precision-guidance technologies.¹⁰ The responses of other states to these developments are likely to involve the creation of infrastructures that support the acquisition of cost-sensitive systems and that offer the greatest prospects of reducing the US advantages in advanced conventional systems. Some, like contemporary Russia, may fall back upon weapons of mass destruction to provide extended deterrence against high-tech conventional threats and even information warfare assaults.¹¹ Others may look to unconventional solutions to high-tech conventional war. In this regard, LTC (ret.) Lester W. Grau's article, "Bashing the Laser Range Finder with a Rock," addresses ways for less technologically advanced nations to confront the United States on the battlefield, while Dr. Jacob W. Kipp examines approaches to warfare in the information age in "Confronting the RMA in Russia". Overall--as *Joint Vision 2010* emphasizes in regard to future war--the US must prepare to face a wider range of threats, emerging unpredictably, employing varying combinations of technology, and challenging us at varying levels of intensity."¹²

REGIONAL GROUPINGS IN TRANSITION

An immediate consequence of the Soviet collapse and subsequent developments in Eurasia and other areas, was a change in the way states and regions are grouped to reflect changing security environments. Catalysts for continuing change include the fragmenting of the USSR and the creation of 15 new states with newly invigorated historical, ethnic, religious, and other affiliations; the breakup of Yugoslavia and other continuing alignment shifts in Eastern Europe; the aggressive assertion of Islamic extremism in a number of areas of the world to include the Middle East, Asia, and Africa; economic and political progress in Latin America amidst lingering insurgency, territorial disputes, and growing instability in Mexico; and the overall disintegration of the Cold War framework that for decades had determined the way states and regions were grouped and considered from a security planning standpoint. Shifts in alliances, coalitions, and ideological orientations almost immediately clouded the traditional threat picture and made increasingly obscure the former distinctions of who we would fight alongside and what dangers we would plan to fight against.

For U.S. Commanders-in-Chief with regional responsibilities, the new security environment will shape the way joint force areas of interest (AOI) are considered and the way that areas of responsibility are defined. For CINC's having functional responsibilities, it will shape their plans for support within newly-defined geographic areas of responsibility. There are illustrations of this in virtually every region.

One notable example is the former Soviet Central Asia, comprising now the five new states of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. Developments in this large,

volatile area directly affect security and stability in Southwest Asia, Central Eurasia, and South Asia. Competing poles of influence in the area threaten surrounding areas. Examples include the national interests of Russia, Iran, Turkey, and China; high density drug and arms trafficking in multiple directions; Islamic extremism and factional conflict; ethnic tensions; environmental and health issues; and even the potential transit of WMD-associated materiel and technology. In other words, the area includes issues of direct concern to USCENTCOM, USEUCOM, and USPACOM as well as the functional CINC's who would provide resources to support them.

DANGERS WITHOUT BORDERS

In addition to the changing significance of states within regions, threats to U.S. interests -- to include threats to the continuity and stability of fragile democratic regimes -- have become less regionally specific given more transparent borders and the great mobility of transnational actors and phenomena. As a consequence, an array of less well-defined dangers have quickly assumed a new and sometimes prominent place in theater planning considerations. Among these latter challenges are what have come to be termed by some variously as "transnational problems," "global ungovernability," "gray area phenomena," or simply "nontraditional security issues."

These designations have been coined by security specialists to capture the proliferation of non-state security threats that are new, newly visible, or of far greater concern than evident during the "cold war." They include, among others, widespread population dislocations; ethnic and religious conflict; epidemic health problems, famine, and serious environmental degradation; evolving terrorist organizations and agendas; international organized crime in its many dimensions, particularly the still-burgeoning drug trade; black and gray market weapons trafficking (including advance conventional armaments and WMD); and "informal" economic organizations that by-pass or avoid state and regional economic systems to name some of the most prominent.¹³

Specific examples both abound and continue to develop in every region. They confront military planners at national level and in the areas of responsibility of each US command. Russian black and gray market arms traffickers, for instance, are quite active in Colombia and other parts of Latin America, drug traffickers from the state of Michoacan, Mexico, are well established in the Yakima Valley of Washington state, while Colombian drug trafficking representatives have established themselves throughout Russia and Eastern Europe to pursue high-volume, high-profit cocaine smuggling efforts.

Thousands of Arab mujahedin volunteers trained during the 1979-1989 Soviet-Afghan war have subsequently provided combat experienced cadres for militant Islamic extremist groups and movements violently confronting governmental control in Kashmir, Algeria, Egypt, the Sudan -- and Bosnia where their presence constitutes a serious concern to US and international peacekeeping forces deployed there. LTC Stephen Gotowicki's "Confronting Terrorism: New Form of Warfare or Mission Impossible?" addresses the evolution of Middle East terrorism and the limited potential for the military in combating it. Robert L. Love's analysis and translation of the Russian document "Concepts in International Peacekeeping," by Colonel Andrey Demurenko (Russia) and Professor Alexander Nikitin (Russia) addresses the importance of a common language in dealing with a problem that frequently transcends borders and ethnic and religious

groupings. Also of concern are the circuitous routes for illegal immigrants from around the world -- together with unprecedented legal population movements -- have created ethnic diasporas and transnational linkages where they had not existed before. U.S. planners, therefore, have to consider threats to regional stability whose origins may be far removed from the region where they are most manifest. This is a circumstance that will increasingly put a premium on cooperation and interaction among U.S. joint force commanders and other government and private agencies.

INTERAGENCY DIMENSIONS OF SECURITY CHALLENGES

National and regional military planning and intelligence staffs are becoming more and more cognizant of the multi-jurisdictional nature and interagency dimensions of security problems abroad. That is, while security problems in many areas of the world have strong military dimensions, there is increasingly a range of key security challenges that blur the distinctions between military, law enforcement, and other civil agency responsibilities.

In this regard, security challenges will typically involve military, law enforcement, civil defense, medical, humanitarian assistance, and other government and non-government participants, plus those with informational and economic concerns. Such security challenges can include insurgencies and separatist movements supported by drug trafficking or other criminality; heavily armed criminal gangs and paramilitaries asserting control over substantial areas or enterprises; illegal immigration and threats to the integrity of national borders; arms trafficking and illegal trade in strategic materials; and the more severe forms of industrial and natural disasters, environmental damage, famine, and public health threats.

As a consequence, regional threat assessments -- particularly those dangers falling under the "other military operations" umbrella -- must be multidimensional in character and reflect the "interagency" nature of assessment and responses required. Mr. William W. Mendel, in his article about Brazil's "Operation Rio: Taking Back the Streets," examines how military forces are increasingly challenged by internal disruption and criminal activities which overpower conventional law enforcement and dispute current civil-military approaches. LTC Karl Prinslow, in his article "Building Military Relations in Africa," considers how military-to-military relations may be enhanced through interagency projects that integrate military and civil sector dimensions.

PROLIFERATION

Weapons proliferation -- long a key U.S. security concern -- constitutes a particularly good example of a high-priority, extraordinarily complex interagency issue that has acquired new military dimensions for post-Cold War leadership. As then Defense Secretary Perry's 1996 *Annual Defense Report* put it in regard to the Department of Defense Counterproliferation Initiative begun in 1993.

This initiative was undertaken in light of the growing threats to U.S. security and national interests posed by the proliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) weapons and their means of delivery. In many of the world's regions where the United States is likely to deploy forces -- Northeast Asia, the Persian Gulf, and the Middle East -- potential adversaries are

pursuing the development or acquisition of NBC weapons. The American experience in the Gulf War made manifest the implications of NBC proliferation for defense planning. For DoD to do its job in the post-Cold War era, it must take seriously the potential NBC dimension of future conflicts.¹⁴

The USSR's break-up following the Gulf War, and the vastly increased dangers of WMD leakage, made assessing the "proliferation of nuclear, biological, chemical, and missile capabilities," a central mission for the national intelligence community, national law enforcement agencies, and other government agencies. Increasingly, it has become an important dimension of the work done by the intelligence and planning staffs of regional and functional CINCs and their service components.¹⁵ The burgeoning interest in WMD proliferation dangers -- and particularly the threat of "nuclear terrorism" -- is illustrated by Dr. Timothy L. Sanz' soon-to-be published research, "The Specter of Nuclear Terrorism: How Real the Threat and How to Prevent It?" which will appear in a subsequent *Military Review* issue and at the FMSO Internet site.

At the mid-point of the 1990s, there are five declared nuclear weapons states and at least 20 others that have acquired -- or are trying to obtain -- nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons.¹⁶ More than a dozen already have operational ballistic missiles.¹⁷ Trafficking in WMD materials -- as the Japanese Aum Shinrikyo cult and FSU fissile material smugglers illustrate -- involves non-state players as well. In addition, some combatant command planners suggested that other categories of especially lethal weapons, facilities, or technologies could benefit from an analogous kind of examination -- -if not officially added to formal programs.¹⁸ Specialists at U.S. Special Operations Command have devoted considerable attention to these issues, given their peacetime and wartime "verification, targeting, and transport" roles in countering proliferation.¹⁹

CHANGE, UNCERTAINTY, AND SURPRISE

Finally, the transitional nature of many key threats, and their diversity, have created an environment where *change*, *uncertainty*, and *surprise* are themselves substantial factors in the development of national and regional military strategies. A number of long-standing friends and former enemies are in the process of fundamental transition, suggesting that traditional relationships and alliances should be critically examined for their future relevance. Important considerations include uneven economic change, to include sharp growth and decline; trade and economic competition and tensions; the presence of ideological and power vacuums in a number of areas, fostering general disorder, extreme nationalism, and a potential turn to authoritarianism; the potential for manipulating events and actions in periods of profound instability and rapid technological change; high levels of political, criminal, and random violence; and the unknown, long-term impact of burgeoning international organized crime and corruption on democratic institutions are identified in every region to one extent or another.²⁰ Mr. Timothy L. Thomas's *Military Review* article "The Age of the New Persuaders" addresses an important dimension of change uncertainty, and surprise by examining the way groups may exploit technology and instability in areas of unrest. Dr. Graham H. Turbiville, Jr. addresses the surprising growth of multiple insurgencies just south of the U.S. border in his article "Mexico's Other Insurgents," while LTC Geoffrey B. Demarest's review essay "Border Patrol Enforcement Versus Militarization" looks at the complex issue of law enforcement on the US-Mexican border.

CONCLUSIONS

In many cases described above, today's dangers are fundamentally different than the security challenges that defined the Cold War threat environment. In every region, the issues are complex, diverse, often non-traditional, and frequently interconnected. These challenges -- which blur traditional distinctions among military, law enforcement, and other roles and missions -- have strong interagency and international dimensions that evolve in an environment characterized by change, uncertainty, and surprise.

Military leaders are pressed to address today's security requirements across the spectrum of conflict, even while they address future force structure, weapons and doctrine. Current requirements range from preparing for major regional contingencies, dealing with internal threats to friendly regimes, addressing a host of transnational dangers, supporting large-scale disaster relief and humanitarian assistance operations, and countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The articles in this special issue of *Military Review* address specific developments promising to shape the future security environment in which the Army of the 21st Century will operate.

Endnotes

- ¹. William J. Clinton, "Remarks by the President in Announcement of New Cabinet Offices," The White House, Office of the Press Secretary: available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/white-house-publications/1996/12/1996-12-05-president-in-naming-security-team-appointments.text>; Internet; accessed 12 December 1996.[BACK](#)
- ². See Headquarters Department of the Army, *Operations*, Field Manual 100-5 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1993), for an overview of MOOTW; and Headquarters Departments of the Army and the Air Force, *Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflicts*, Field Manual 100-20; Air Force Pamphlet 3-20 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1990), for a detailed discussion of low intensity conflict (LIC), the earlier designation of what is now called military operations other than war(MOOTW), and more simply, other military operations (OMO).[BACK](#)
- ³. William J. Perry, "Message of the Secretary of Defense," *Annual Report to the President and the Congress*, 1996, received via Internet. [BACK](#)
- ⁴. This requirement--essential for all military establishments--is well-articulated by a former Deputy Chief of the Soviet General Staff and its Directorate of Military Science Makhmut Akhmetovich Gareyev, *Esli zavtra voyna? (Chto izmenitsya v kharaktere vooruzhennoy bor'by v blizhayshie 20-25 let)* [If War Comes Tomorrow? What Will Change in the Nature of Armed Struggle in the Next 20-25 years], (Moscow: Vladar, 1995).[BACK](#)
- ⁵. Andrew Krepinevich, "Cavalry to Computer," *The National Interest*, 37 (Fall 1994), pp. 30-42.[BACK](#)

⁶. Describing the operational environment of land warfare in the 21st century, General Gordon Sullivan, then Chief of Staff of the US Army, and his coauthor, LTC James M. Dubik, spoke of five trends: Greater lethality and dispersion; increased volume and precision of fire; better integrative technology leading to increased efficiency and effectiveness; increasing ability of smaller units to create decisive results; and greater invisibility and increased delectability. See Gordon R. Sullivan and James M. Dubik, *Land Warfare in the 21st Century* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1993).[BACK](#)

⁷. Gordon R. Sullivan and Anthony M. Coroalles, *The Army in the Information Age* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1995), pp. 11-12.[BACK](#)

⁸. Assistant Secretary of the Army for Research, Development, and Acquisition, Gilbert F. Decker, "Today's Modernization: Tomorrow's Readiness," *Army*, October 1995, p. 36.[BACK](#)

⁹. Dennis J. Reimer, "Maintaining a Solid Framework While Building for the Future," *Army*, October 1995, p. 24.[BACK](#)

¹⁰. Ibid., p. 4.[BACK](#)

¹¹. See Doctor V.I. Tsymbal, "Kontsepsiya 'Informatsionnoy voyny'", (Concept of Information Warfare), speech given at the Russian-U.S. conference on "Evolving post Cold War National Security Issues," Moscow 12-14 September, p 7. As he noted: "From a military point of view, the use of information warfare means against Russia or its armed forces will categorically not be considered a non-military phase of a conflict, whether there were casualties or not...considering the possible catastrophic consequences of the use of strategic information warfare means by an enemy, whether on economic or state command and control systems, or on the combat potential of the armed forces,...Russia retains the right to use nuclear weapons first against the means and forces of information warfare, and then against the aggressor state itself." [BACK](#)

¹². Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Vision 2010*, Washington D.C.: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1996), p. 11.[BACK](#)

¹³. Prominent among the specialists who have addressed these issues have been Roy Godson and the National Strategy Information Center who have conducted a number of seminars to address associated issues. Among the works which deal with these problems are National Strategy Information Center, "Dangerous Links: Terrorism, Crime, Ethnic and Religious Conflict After the Cold War," A Report on the Gray Area Phenomenon Research Seminar, Washington D.C., July 1992; Xavier Raufer, "Gray Areas: A New Security Threat, *Political Warfare* (Spring 1992); Roy Godson and William J. Olson, *International Organized Crime: Emerging Threat to US Security* (Washington, D.C.: National Strategy Information Center, 1993); and J. F. Holden Rhodes and Peter A. Lupsha, "Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Gray Area Phenomenon and the New World Disorder," *Low Intensity Conflict and Law Enforcement* Vol. 2, No. 2 (Autumn 1993), pp. 212-226.[BACK](#)

¹⁴. Perry, "Counterproliferation and Treaty Activities," *Chapter 7 in Annual Report to the President and the Congress*, received via Internet. [BACK](#)

¹⁵. For an overview of the development U.S. WMD nonproliferation and counterproliferation policy and agencies involved as of 1995, see Ibid., pp. 9-10, 25-26, 71-79; 115-126; "Weapons of Mass Destruction" in Institute for National Strategic Studies, *Strategic Assessment 1995*, pp. 115-126; and Office of the Deputy Secretary of Defense, *Report on Nonproliferation and Counterproliferation Activities and Programs*, May 1994.[BACK](#)

¹⁶. Perry, *Annual Report to the President and the Congress*, p. 25. [BACK](#)

¹⁷. Office of the Deputy Secretary of Defense, *Report on Nonproliferation and Counterproliferation*, p. ES-1.[BACK](#)

¹⁸. Notable in this regard are the problems posed by land mines (associated with extraordinarily high levels of casualties world-wide); the great destructive potential posed by some kinds of industrial facilities (chemical, insecticide, and energy facilities) if attacked or the recipient of collateral damage; new generations of improved conventional munitions; sleeping agents; and the delivery of WMD by non-missile/aviation systems, i.e., terrorist-delivered WMD.[BACK](#)

¹⁹. Interviews by the authors with Colonel Corson L. Hilton, U.S. Army, Deputy Director for Policy, J5, HQ USSOCOM, and other USSOCOM staff officers, 18 January 1995, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida.[BACK](#)

²⁰. For one good, forward-looking example of theater change and resulting complexities from a special operations perspective, see the briefing, 10th Special Forces Group, "Peacetime Campaign Plan in EUCOM," Fort Devens, Massachusetts, 13 April 1994. While focusing in large measure on the role of special operations forces in dealing with these peacetime challenges, the presentation sets out many of the little-considered, but increasingly important dangers that characterize the EUCOM area of responsibility and interest. [BACK](#)